

Message Text

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PAGE 01 TEL AV 04658 01 OF 02 271700Z
ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 NEAE-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00
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TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6915
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
USMISSION SINAI

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 TEL AVIV 4658

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PBOR, IS, JO
SUBJECT: THE NEGATIVE NATIONAL CONSENSUS AND THE WEST BANK: A
BRIEF COMMENTARY

REFS: (A) TEL AVIV 4581, (B) TEL AVIV 4281

BEGIN SUMMARY: BEGIN AND DAYAN HAVE NOW SAID SEVERAL
TIMES THAT A CONSENSUS EXISTS IN ISRAEL
AGAINST THE WITH DRAWAL TO THE 1967 BORDERS AND
AGAINST THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A PALESTINIAN STATE.
THAT CONSENSUS IS ESSENTIALLY A NEGATIVE ONE AND
STATES THAT ISRAELIS ARE OPPOSED TO WITHDRAWAL AND
A PALESTINIAN STATE INTER ALIA FOR SECURITY REASONS. HOW-
EVER, THERE IS NO POSITIVE CONSENSUS ABOUT WHAT ISRAEL
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PAGE 02 TEL AV 04658 01 OF 02 271700Z

OUGHT TO ACCEPT IN COUNTER-DISTINCTION TO WHAT THEY
OUGHT NOT TO ACCEPT ON THE WEST BANK. WE BELIEVE

BEGIN AND DAYAN HAVE BLURRED THE DISTINCTION
BETWEEN THE NEGATIVE CONSENSUS WHICH DOES EXIST
AND THE POSITIVE CONSENSUS WHICH DOES NOT.
AS WE HAVE PREVIOUSLY REPORTED, DISAGREEMENTS

ABOUT THE WEST BANK HAS BEEN A PART OF ISRAELI HISTORY AND DEBATE CONTINUES TODAY BETWEEN THOSE WHO FAVOR SOME KIND OF COMPROMISE AND THOSE WHO FAVOR RETENTION OF THE WEST BANK. THE LATTER, HEADED BY BEGIN AND DAYAN, HOLD THE UPPER HAND TODAY AND WE BELIEVE THAT ANY MEANINGFUL OPPOSITION TO BEGIN AND DAYAN IS UNLIKELY, AT LEAST UNTIL AFTER BEING MEETS WITH THE PRESIDENT. END SUMMARY

1. BEGIN AND DAYAN HAVE STATED ON SEVERAL OCCASIONS IN RECENT DAYS THAT THERE IS A NATIONAL CONSENSUS IN ISRAEL, WITH THE EXCEPTION OF THE PARTIES OF THE FAR LEFT (SHELLI AND RAKAH), AGAINST WITHDRAWAL TO THE 1967 BORDERS--EVEN WITH MINOR ADJUSTMENTS-- AND AGAINST THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A WEST BANK/GAZA PALESTINIAN STATE. THEY HAVE MADE THESE STATEMENTS IN ORDER TO BUTTRESS THEIR POSITION AGAINST THE PUBLICLY-STATED U.S. APPROACH TO ARAB-ISRAELI NEGOTIATIONS AS DESCRIBED MOST RECENTLY IN VICE PRESIDENT MONDALE'S SAN FRANCISCO SPEECH. THEY CLAIM THAT THEIR POSITION REFLECTS NOT SIMPLY THEIR PERSONAL VIEW NOR THAT OF THE PARTIES IN THE GOVERNING COALITION, BUT RATHER THE JUDGMENT OF VIRTUALLY ALL ISRAELIS. WE BELIEVE THAT IT IS IMPORTANT TO ESTABLISH IN MORE PRECISE TERMS
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PAGE 03 TEL AV 04658 01 OF 02 271700Z

WHAT THIS CONSENSUS IS AND WHAT IT IS NOT.

2. THE POSITIO DESCRIBED BY EGIN AND DAYAN IS ESSENTIALLY A NEGATIVE NATIONAL CONSENSUS. IT PORTRAYS ACCURATELY THE PREDOMINANT ISRAELI VIEW THAT ISRAEL'S SECURITY WOULD BE UNACCEPTABLY JEOPARDIZED BY WITHDRAWAL TO THE 1967 LINES, EVEN WITH MINOR ADJUSTMENTS (SEE REFTEL A). THESE BORDERS WERE REPEATEDLY CHARACTERIZED BY THE OUTGOING RABIN GOVERNMENT AS INDEFENSIBLE, AND THIS ALSO HAD BEEN THE POSITION OF THE MEIR GOVERNMENT BEFORE IT.

3. THERE IS ALSO A NEARLY UNANIMOUS CONSENSUS IN ISRAEL AGAINST THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A PALESTINIAN STATE ON THE WEST BANK AND THE GAZA STRIP. INDEED, THE MEIR AND RABIN GOVERNMENTS ALSO HAD BEEN OPPOSED TO THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A THIRD STATE BETWEEN ISRAEL AND JORDAN AS THE SOLUTION TO THE PALESTINIAN PROBLEM. THE TENERALLY ACCEPTED VIEW HERE IS THAT THIS THIRD STATE SOONER OR LATER WOULD PASS UNDER THE CONTROL OF THE PLO, REGARDLESS

OF WHAT ITS NOMINAL LEADERSHIP MIGHT BE. THIS
PLO-CONTROLLED STATE, IT IS BELIEVED HERE, WOULD
INEVITABLY HAVE IRREDENTIST ASPIRATIONS AGAINST
ISRAEL AND POSSIBLY ALSO AGAINST JORDAN. ANOTHER
WIDELY-HELD ISRAELI VIEW IS THAT A PALESTINIAN
STATE ON THE WEST BANK AND GAZA WOULD RAPIDLY FALL
UNDER SOVIET CONTROL, FURTHER DESTABILIZING
THE AREA AND ENDANGERING ISRAEL. THE LEBANESE
CIVIL WAR HAS ALSO LEFT ITS IMPACT, CONVINCING
MANY ISRAELIS THAT AN AUTONOMOUS PALESTINIAN
POLITICAL ENTITY ON ITS BORDER WOULD ENGULF ISRAEL
IN A SIMILAR TRAGEDY.

4. THERE IS NOT, HOWEVER, A POSITIVE NATIONAL
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PAGE 04 TEL AV 04658 01 OF 02 271700Z

CONSENSUS IN ISRAEL ON THE DISPOSITION OF THE
WEST BANK IN A FINAL PEACE SETTLEMENT. BEGIN
AND DAYAN, BY EMPHASIZING THE NEGATIVE CONSENSUS
DESCRIBED ABOVE, TO SOME EXTENT MAY HAVE BLURRED
THIS DISTINCTION IN ORDER TO SUGGEST TO INER-
NATIONAL MEDIA THAT ALL ISRAELI PARTIES, EXCEPT
SHELLI AND RAKAH, AGREE ENTIRELY WITH THE BEGIN
GOVERNMENT'S APPROACH.

5. ISRAELIS HAVE LONG DISAGREED AMONG THEMSELVES ABOUT THE
WEST BANK. ON ONE LEVEL, THERE HAS BEEN A DEBATE
BETWEEN PRAGMATISTS AND IDEOLOGUES, BETWEEN THOSE

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PAGE 01 TEL AV 04658 02 OF 02 271714Z
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 TEL AVIV 4658

PREPARED TO TRY TO ACCOMMODATE COMPETING ARAB
CLAIMS IN A TERRITORIAL COMPROMISE AND THOSE
WHO BELIEVE THAT THE ARABS AND THE INTRNATIONAL
COMMUNITY OUGHT INSTEAD TO RECOGNIZE THE INHERENT
RIGHT OF THE JEWISH PEOPLE TO THE LAND OF ISRAEL.
IN 1947-48, THIS DEBATE PITTED BEN GURION'S
LABOR CAMP FAVORING ACCEPTANCE OF THE UNGA
PARTITION PLAN AGAINST BEGIN'S REVISIONIST
MOVEMENT PREFERRING TO HOLD OUT FOR INTERNATIONAL
ACCEPTANCE OF ITS CLAIM TO MANDATORY PALESTINE.
AFTER THE 1967 WAR, IT BECAME A DEBATE BETWEEN
PROponents OF A NEGOTIATED SETTLEMENT WITH JORDAN
BASED ON TERRITORIAL COMPROMISE AND THOSE WHO
ADVOCATED RETENTION OF THE WEST BANK OUT OF A
COMBINATION OF HISTROCIAL, RELIGIOUS AND/OR
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PAGE 02 TEL AV 04658 02 OF 02 271714Z

SECURITY CONSIDERATIONS. THE DEBATE IN ITS
VARIOUS FORMS CUT ACROSS PARTY LINES AND
CONTINUES TO DO SO TODAY.

6. UNDER THE MEIR AND RABIN GOVERNMENTS, THE
DEBATE FOCUSSED MORE ON IDEOLOGICAL CONSIDERA-
TIONS, AND WAS CARRIED OUT LARGELY INSIDE THE
LABOR ALIGNMENT. BEGIN'S VIEWS WERE KNOWN BUT
WERE LARGELY DISCOUNTED SINCE HE WAS ON THE
SIDELINES OF POWER. IN THE MEIR GOVERNMENT, THE
DEBATE PITTED THEN FOREIGN MINISTER EBAN AND
FINANCE MINISTER SAPIR AGAINST THEN DEFENSE
MINISTER DAYAN. EBAN AND SAPIR ARGUED THAT ISRAEL
WOULD LOSE ITS JEWISH AND DEMOCRATIC CHARACTER IF
IT INSISTED ON PERMANENT RETENTION OF THE WEST
BANK. YIGAL ALLON PROPOSED THE WELL-KNOWN PLAN
CARRYING HIS NAME FOCUSSING PRIMARILY ON SECURITY
CONSIDERATIONS. THE MEIR AND RABIN GOVERNMENTS
ESTABLISHED SETTLEMENTS IN THE WEST BANK IN
ACCORDANCE WITH THAT PLAN ALTHOUGH IT WAS NEVER

FORMALLY ADOPTED. DAYAN, AFTER INITIALLY SUPPORTING EFFORTS TO SEEK A NEGOTIATED SETTLEMENT WITH JORDAN BASED ON THE PRINCIPLE OF TERRITORIAL COMPROMISE, OPTED LATER FOR A FUNCTIONAL APPROACH IN WHICH ISRAEL WOULD RETAIN ITS MILITARY PRESENCE WHILE JORDAN WOULD EXERCISE ADMINISTRATIVE AUTONOMY OVER CIVILIAN MATTERS AND WEST BANK RESIDENTS WOULD RETAIN THEIR JORDANIAN CITIZENSHIP. AS FAR AS WE KNOW, THIS REMAINS HIS POSITION.

7. THE INTERNAL DEBATE CONTINUES TODAY, ALBEIT IN MUTED FORM. THE MAINSTREAM OF THE LABOR ALIGNMENT
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PAGE 03 TEL AV 04658 02 OF 02 271714Z

(EXCEPT MAPAM) TENDS TO FAVOR A TERRITORIAL COMPROMISE BASED ON THE ALLON PLAN. THE DMC ALSO FAVORS A COMPARABLE APPROACH. PERES IN THE KNESSET WARNED AGAINST THE DANGER OF LIKUD'S "NOT AN INCH" APPROACH--AS HE DESCRIBED IT. YADIN SAID HE PREFERRED "A STRONG PEOPLE IN PART OF THE HOMELAND RATHER THAN A WEAK PEOPLE IN ALL OF IT." ON THE OTHER HAND, BEGIN AND DAYAN FAVOR ISRAELI RETENTION OF THE WEST BANK, AND DAYAN SAID LAST WEEK THAT ISRAEL WILL NOT PROPOSE A POLITICAL SETTLEMENT BASED ON ITS PARTITION. IN A FORMAL SENSE, THEY ARE SUPPORTED BY THEIR COALITION MEMBERS IN THE LIKUD AND THE RELIGIOUS PARTIES ALTHOUGH THE ACTUAL SITUATION IS MORE COMPLICATED. POLITICAL OBSERVERS BELIEVE THAT THE LIBERALS, SOME NRP MEMBERS AND AGUDA ISRAEL WOULD GIVE SERIOUS CONSIDERATION TO SUPPORTING A TERRITORIAL COMPROMISE ON THE WEST BANK IF IT WERE CRYSTAL-CLEAR THAT THE TRADE-OFF WAS PEACE IN THE FULLEST SENSE.

8. THE OPPONENTS OF THE BEGIN/DAYAN APPROACH ARE DISADVANTAGED TODAY FOR THREE REASONS. FIRST, THEY ARE IN THE OPPOSITION. SECOND, THE U.S. PUBLICLY- STATED APPROACH GOES BEYOND WHAT THEY REGARD AS AN ACCEPTABLE SOLUTION. THIRD, THE ARABS DEMAND FULL WITHDRAWAL AND APPEAR TO BE UNINTERESTED IN A WEST BANK TERRITORIAL COMPROMISE. INDEED, IT WAS ON THESE GROUNDS THAT DAYAN PROPOSED IN THE KNESSET ON JUNE 20 THAT THE INTERNAL DEBATE ON ALTERNATE SOLUTIONS FOR THE WEST BANK BE SUSPENDED. WE BELIEVE IT LIKELY THAT THE INTERNAL OPPOSITION TO THE BEGIN/DAYAN APPROACH WILL REMAIN MUTED IN THE WEEKS AHEAD. EVEN THOSE WHO DISAGREE SHARPLY WITH THAT APPROACH ARE INCLINED TO WAIT AT LEAST UNTIL THE BEGIN/CARTER MEETING BEFORE DECIDING

HOW VIGOROUSLY TO EXPRESS THEIR VIEWS. AS ONE
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PAGE 04 TEL AV 04658 02 OF 02 271714Z

DMC MEMBER PUT IT TO US, THE OPPOSITION
TO THE BEGIN/DAYAN APPROACH WITHIN ISRAEL WILL
LARGELY BE DETERMINED BY THE POSTURE TAKEN BY
THE UNITED STATES.
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